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OO RUEHBZ RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5841  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0214  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3785  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7310  
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0908  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3082  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0723  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS RANGOON 000259

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)  
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN BURMA

REF: A. STATE 27908  
[1](#)B. STATE 19118

[1](#)1. (SBU) In honor of International Women's Day, the Charge d'Affaires held a well-attended afternoon discussion on March 8 with women leaders from the National League for Democracy, the 88 Generation Students, ethnic representatives, and leaders of grass-roots NGOs. The Charge opened the discussion by reading a portion of Secretary Rice's statement commemorating International Women's Day and noted the February 27 panel discussion at the UN on state-sanctioned rape in Burma and Sudan. The Charge then opened the floor to the attendees to speak about what concerned them most regarding the situation of women in Burma.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Participants were eager to share their views. Most of the women shared their concerns about the spread of HIV/AIDs and lamented that more and more women are turning to prostitution to earn a living because of lack of economic opportunities. The declining quality of education in Burma, always a popular topic of discussion, was repeatedly cited as a major factor in Burma's current political and social problems. Social activists and members of NGOs talked about their experiences working with prostitutes and women with drug-addicted family members. They also described their efforts to provide more accurate and useful information to make up for its absence.

[1](#)3. (SBU) After the opening presentations, the women broke up into informal discussion groups. This was the fourth gathering of women activists hosted by the Charge. The mix of older, experienced political activists and younger members of the emerging 88 Generation Students group have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn from each other and build networks. Labor activist Su Su Nwe attended, as well as women leaders from Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy. Because of their activism, most of the participants are constantly watched and harassed by the military regime. This event provided a safe haven and rare opportunity for these activists to gather, network, and frankly discuss the most important issues women face in Burma today.

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